

# THE WAYS OF WOMAN

IDA M. TARBELL

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# **THE WAYS OF WOMAN**



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# THE WAYS OF WOMAN

BY

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"MADAME ROLAND," "NAPOLEON  
AND JOSEPHINE," ETC.

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## FOREWORD

THE little essays gathered in this volume are an attempt to interpret informally certain activities and responsibilities of the average normal woman. It is not surprising that in an age intoxicated as ours is by changes in its outward habits and conduct, there should come a certain contempt for the great slow currents with which mankind has moved since the world began.

The old currents are lost we say in electrified, self-directing eddies, pools, streams. We have a new world of machines and systems—the world of *Kultur*. But this is to study only the surface. The few great currents of life persist as do the tides of the oceans.

## FOREWORD

They carry with them the human life of the world. There persists, too, as an inevitable, unescapable result of the currents, certain obligations and activities.

What is the relation to society and to the future of these old and common pursuits of the woman?

This question suggests the subject of this little book. The opinions and ideas in it have grown naturally out of the every-day life and observations of the writer. They are not offered as a "solution of the woman problem" or as final in matter or form. They supplement the author's earlier book, "The Business of Being a Woman."

All of these essays have appeared in the *Woman's Home Companion*.

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# WHAT WOMEN ARE DOING



# THE WAYS OF WOMAN

## CHAPTER I

### WHAT WOMEN ARE DOING

THERE is no more effective medicine to apply to feverish public sentiments than figures. To be sure, they must be properly prepared, must cover the case, not confine themselves to a corner of it, and they must be gathered for their own sake, not for the sake of a theory. Such preparation we get in a national census. The last census, particularly, is a trustworthy and sweeping survey of ourselves. It has already had a cooling effect on several overheated popular notions. In time it ought to be able to steady and strengthen even the pulse of the Woman

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Question. There are certain phases of that question that need a liberal dose of figures, particularly those concerned with what women are doing.

What *are* women doing? Last year a young foreign professor went up and down the country lecturing on the family. He had a clever trick of introducing his remarks by an earnest assurance of his belief in the institution, and then proceeding to wipe it off the surface of the earth with a neatness and dispatch which set everybody to applauding. He said he felt it his duty, as a student of facts, to warn society that the family was doomed. His conclusions were based entirely on a series of assertions, for he offered no proofs. Briefly, they were that things had become so hard for the masses that women were being driven into shops and factories in order to support themselves and their children; women were not



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marrying as freely as formerly — they were bearing fewer children; they were losing their taste for home-making and were finding careers in trades and professions more satisfying.

Through all of our social and economic discussions, particularly in the more radically inclined groups, these views run: women are changing; the home is going; industry is slowly smothering them both.

It requires no eye of a lynx to see that the ways of women the world over are very different from their ways a hundred years ago; and so are the ways of men. Being parts of human society, it is inevitable that this should be so. The world is actively reshaping itself, and everybody in it feels the pull and the drive. But do these changes affect the fundamental tastes and relations that nature and society have set for men and women? Is the family going? What do the figures say?

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Begin with the class of women of whom we have heard most through the last decade, the class which has served as a fulcrum for much of the agitation and argument — the woman in industry, by which is meant usually the woman in shops and factories. Does the Thirteenth Census support the assumption that this woman forms a class so large and so permanent that society must reorganize its educational and social institutions on her account? “There are several million young girls in our factories and shops” (“several” being usually translated as seven or eight millions). This statement we see and hear continually in print and from platforms. It is made by able people who carry weight with the public and whose only object in making it is to arouse interest in legislation, and reform which they genuinely believe will help the working-woman. But there are only

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about nine million young girls (ten to nineteen years of age) in the country. If "several millions" of these are in factories and shops, our outlook is serious indeed. But how about it?

As a matter of fact, far from there being "several" million young girls in industries, there are only about eight millions (8,075,772) girls and women of all ages, from ten to one hundred, employed a part or all of the time in the land, in money-earning work of all kinds — professions, agriculture, dressmaking, clerking, business, domestic science. Less than a fourth of these eight millions are in "shops and factories," and, moreover, probably not over half of this one fourth can be called "young girls," that is, are under twenty-one years of age. There are something like 111,000 women employed in making suits, coats, cloaks and overalls in the country;

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66,000, or one half of them, are over twenty-one years of age. There are 68,000 women in our shoe factories, and 41,000 of them are over twenty-one years of age. There are something over 148,000 in cotton mills, and 77,000 of them are over twenty-one years old. There are around 250,000 saleswomen in the country, and 165,000 are over twenty-one.

Not only are these "young girls in shops and factories" fewer in number than we are told, they are far from a permanent class. There is no class of workers in the country so transient. In scores of places employing girls the entire force will change in a year. The man who is able to hold fifty per cent of his force more than a year achieves wonders. An inventory recently taken in one of the largest shops in New York City, and one of the most satisfactory

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working places for girls in this country, showed that only twenty-three per cent of the girls had been there as long as seven years. The average girl in shops and factories probably does not work over three years.

What does she do? Let the Thirteenth Census tell us. Eight times out of ten she marries.

But she is not marrying, the platform cries to us. The platform is wrong. It quotes misleading figures. "Less than half of the forty-five million women of the country marry," it says. If we consider the sex as a whole, regardless of age, this is true. We have in the United States now 44,639,989 "females," including all from one year and under to one hundred years and over. Fifty-two and seven tenths per cent of these — babes, maids, and women — are single, that is, literally less than half of the sex

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are married. But drop out those not yet of marriageable age, and you have a different story. There will, of course, be a difference of opinion about what is a marriageable age; but let us call it nineteen or over. If we settle on that, we must drop at once from our estimate something over twenty millions of the sex. It puts a different complexion at once on the marriage percentage. As a fact, seventy per cent of those who are fifteen years or more old marry; and if you raise the age to twenty, eighty and one half per cent marry; to twenty-five, eighty-six and seven tenths per cent marry.

But, grant these figures to be correct—it is hard, even for an orator, to defy a census—and still the platform cries that “women don’t marry as they once did.” The truth is they marry more freely than they did in 1900 or in 1890.

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There has been a gain of nearly two per cent in the number of marriages of women over fifteen in the last twenty years; and two per cent, when dealing with nearly twenty-one millions, is a considerable number.

But, grant that they marry; they do not "stay married." They separate, are divorced; so that the result is even more disastrous for the present social system than single life. There has been an increase in divorce. In the twenty-one million married women whom the census takers of 1910 reported, they found 185,065 who had been divorced. Considering the difficulties of married life, the number does not appall. It rather gives one a greater respect for human beings to see that they can handle such a complicated relation with such a small percentage of disaster. There is no other human relation that can show anything like so

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large a statistical proof of success. The number of divorces found in 1910 is greater, proportionately, than the census takers unearthed in 1900, still larger than they found in 1890. In each of these ten-year periods there has been an increase of one tenth of one per cent. It is doubtful if this be due to loss of faith in marriage. A proportion of it is due to a higher ideal of marriage, an unwillingness to see the relation prostituted by a dissolute, cruel, or unfaithful partner, in which public opinion is certainly back of the person, as in the main is the law.

A percentage is due, too, to the greater carelessness with which marriages are made under our changing social practices. We have removed largely from boys and girls the protecting social devices by which we once guided their relations and choices. They go and come freely and,



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as might be expected, marry with less sense of the seriousness of their undertaking. More mistakes are probably made, and where they turn out to be very bad mistakes there is nothing for it but divorce. When we have learned to add to the freedom, which we have thrust on the young, the sobriety and knowledge with which they need to use it, there will be fewer divorces from careless marriages.

But grant that marriages are increasing and that the increase in divorce is neither great nor of direful meaning, the alarmist platform has still another proof that marriage is a failure; that economic conditions are driving women out of the home into industry; that the home is doomed, and that henceforth girls must be educated for industrial and not for domestic activities. This last foothold of the theory is that children

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are decreasing. Women are not bearing children as they once did.

It is pretty difficult, even with the best of censuses before us, to find out just what has happened in the last one hundred years to the population of the United States. It has suffered serious vicissitudes, such as the Civil War, making it impossible for twenty years at least to find out what was happening in a large section of the country. It has had a continual but uneven stream of immigration pouring into it. That it has increased is true. "But it is the immigrant, the including of the Indian, the fecundity of the negro and of the 'lower races' which has caused the increase. The true American is not increasing." Thus the platform. But the Thirteenth Census speaks better of the true American. According to it our native white population, those whose

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parents were both born in this country, not only is keeping up the birth rate but in the last decade has increased it by over two per cent. He makes a better showing than since 1870.

The truth is, there is no reason whatever for believing that revolutionary changes are going on in those relations and activities which have been regarded as basic in woman's life. She is no larger factor in industrial life than she has always been, but the form of industry has changed. It draws her into great groups, and those groups collect in cities and manufacturing towns. We see her oftener than we did when she canned and wove and sewed in small and isolated groups. She is more obvious. She marries, makes her home, bears her children. That which disconcerts those who observe her, compare her with her predecessor, and conclude she is some-

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thing new in the world, is mainly that she talks, thinks, and wants things that apparently never interested her before. But this is true of men as of women. She, like him, is reacting to the new vision of the possibilities in human life.

Under the quickening power of this vision women are casting off old forms of restraint which the belief that the mass of human beings could not be trusted to look out for themselves had spun. They are putting their hands to new tasks, their heads to new thoughts. That they may give time to things which are not worth having, may doubt the significance of old things which are essential in all life, is but the human way in periods of change. When you come down to the actual facts in the case as shown in a searching document like the census, you find that whatever the stir on the surface, below, the same great occupation,

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the woman's profession, claims her as it always has.

Let us not be deceived. The human heart does not change. It demands its mate, always has, always will; and the mated will find a corner to themselves where they can sit by their own fire and rear their own brood.

Their corner may be a flat and not a cottage, their fire may be a gas log and not a bundle of sticks, their dinner may come in from the corner in cans and be heated and not cooked, the wife may vote and the husband may give himself a score of liberties an earlier generation would have frowned on, but what has all that to do with the foundations of life? These are but the fluctuations in ways and expressions which each succeeding generation surely brings. They may give a different setting, add a new color, or a strangely sounding note —

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but they do not alter the nature, the meaning, the essential character of their undertaking. Of this the Thirteenth Census offers us the proof of figures. Nor can it be doubted that each successive census will show, as this does, an increasing belief in the undertaking and an ambition to develop it to the fullest strength and beauty.

**GIVE THE GIRL A CHANCE**





## CHAPTER II

### GIVE THE GIRL A CHANCE

SHOULD a girl be trained for what she will probably do in the world? Of every one hundred American girls who live to be twenty-five years old eighty-seven marry (eighty-six and seven-tenths to be exact). One can form a fairly accurate judgment of the proportion of these eighty-seven who have been prepared for their adventure by considering the training of the marriageable girls he knows in various classes. Probably not over ten per cent have had systematic and well-considered education in the technique, relations, and significance of the varied tasks which will be thrown upon them. It is not to the needs of the eighty-seven that modern industrial

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and technical education looks. It is to that of the thirteen out of the one hundred who will presumably be thrown on their own resources. Parents very generally encourage this. They want their daughters prepared to take care of themselves "if anything happens." The girl encourages it: she wants to be independent "if anything happens." Generally speaking, both parents and girls look to the High School and in fewer cases the college to do the fitting. If she has "graduated," she can be expected to earn her living without further expense. The expectation is out of all proportion to the realization.

It is not the business of schools and colleges to fit young people to earn a living. They teach us to read that we may know what the world is thinking, feeling, and doing, that we may enlarge our budget of "information,"

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correct and refine our ideas. They teach us to write, that we may pass on our thoughts, feelings, and ideas; mathematics, that we may understand the terms in which the world measures, weighs, computes, and handles all the exact sciences. It is to enable us to live with our fellows on more understanding terms that we go to school; that all of this contributes to the problem of earning our living is of course true; but that is not its object.

In the case of a boy this is understood. We do not expect the High School to fit him for business or the college for a profession. We know that he must begin at the bottom on four, five, or six dollars a week and learn his business or trade. Or he must spend three years at his medicine or law and then five to ten of uncertainty and waiting building up his position.

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We ask the girl from High School or college to step at once into a self-supporting position — and she is entirely unprepared. Like the boy, she must learn to do the work asked of her — and neither she nor her parents as a rule are willing to take the time and go to the expense of an apprenticeship. Is it strange that this should be so when the chances are eighty-seven to thirteen in every hundred that she will not stick to the trade or profession?

We have then this unsatisfactory situation. The average girl's time and strength is spent on school until she is fourteen to sixteen or twenty according to the circumstances and position of her family. At the end of the time she is expected to look after herself. She is unprepared, and neither she nor her parents are particularly enthusiastic about preparation, since the balance of

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probability is so overwhelmingly for marriage. Work then is for a period more or less of a stop gap.

But the school no more prepares girls for marriage than it does for self-support. And in probably twenty-four out of twenty-five cases nothing else prepares her. The opinion of teachers, parents, and the girls seems to be that when marriage comes she'll rise to the occasion — she'll pick up all that is necessary. She does, just as she "picks up" teaching, journalism, or accounting. She learns in doing — at large risk of discouragement and failure on her own part and irritation and exhaustion on the part of those dependent on her services. All the preliminary training that one can get is none too much with which to begin a serious enterprise. Nobody denies that marriage entails for the girl tasks serious enough — the most serious in fact asked

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of any individual in all the varied relations of life. In spite of this even educators throw up their hands at the demand that some scheme of training be devised that will give a girl a sense of the meaning of her new position and some idea of the qualities she needs to wrestle with its problems.

The writer has never found herself more unpopular than in talking on the need of regarding domestic science as a vocation to a Congress interested in industrial training for girls. Stenography, box-making, book-binding, book-keeping, salesmanship, journalism — anything but that which eighty-seven out of a hundred must do! But the educators are no more indifferent than parents or girls. The truth is few see domestic work as a vocation for which it is possible to give systematic and scientific training. Probably it is too

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complicated for the quality and quantity of thought that has been given it by the average mind. It is easy enough to "see" box-making or accounting, but who shall say where the business of keeping a house for a family shall begin or end?

Certainly few mothers or teachers are able to arouse the imagination of girls to consider housekeeping as a vocation. The average girl in a well-to-do family has no comprehensive idea of the meaning of any of its operations. Take the matter of getting a meal. If she has set the table attractively and prepared the dessert, she is inclined to feel that she has done a substantial part of the work. That is, she does the part that pleases her to do and which "shows,"—the part which in a crowded household is oftenest neglected and which she misses most. The ability and desire to look after these details satisfies her. That a

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meal means linen and silver and china — food not only appetizing but nourishing and at the same time within the limits of the family income — a complicated problem of various elements she has never been forced to see.

She has the same limited outlook when it comes to keeping the house. She is perfectly willing to take upon herself “fixing the flowers” and keeping the living room tidy — but of that foresight which not only keeps things in perpetual order but in perpetual repair, which knows not only what it is to have a guest room complete but complete on a small income, which looks not only to appearances, but to health, amusement, and the needs and tastes of the various members of the family, — there is no teaching of this, and yet this and not “looks” is the meaning behind the operations and processes of housekeeping.



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The bulk of instruction a girl gets both at home and in the domestic training classes of the schools only emphasizes her idea that if she knows how to make chicken terrapin and what kind of curtains are suitable for casement and what for French windows, she "knows her business." That is, the training she gets is almost entirely in manipulations and processes, in receipts and formulæ and "ways." It is rule-of-thumb instruction. It concerns itself very little with principles. It does not aim to arouse the imagination or to set the mind to work on the succession of problems each day turns up; yet nothing is more certain than that *thinking* on domestic subjects must be the end of domestic training before we get very far in making it a vocation. The old complaints about housework — the "hot cook stove," the "back-breaking sweeping," are oftener

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than not the complaints of inefficiency. The women whose backs have been bent because they did not know how to think far enough to fit the height of their dish pans and the lengths of their broom handle to their own stature are more than those whom the operations themselves have killed.

Going into a country kitchen to make a cup of coffee from the bean, the writer found that the coffee mill was taken down after each grinding and its two parts kept in different rooms — twenty steps apart. The coffee was twenty-five steps from the mill. The coffee pot ten steps from the pot, and when the coffee was ready for the stove, the stove was in another room ! One crossed and recrossed, traced and retraced, his steps in a preparing which could easily have been done without moving from his position ! Yet for at least three years that kitchen

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had been under the orders of an exceptionally good self-trained housekeeper and it had been used by at least three excellent cooks.

Nothing is more difficult in households than to break up established methods of doing things although as foolish and wearing as the above. This has been a complaint of all history — women would not change their “ways”! “They dip their wool into hot water according to the ancient plan, all of them without exception and never made the slightest innovation. They sit and cook as of old. They carry upon their heads as of old.” Thus, Aristophanes, 2500 years ago. Take the laundrying of clothes. There is a good part of the world where the women still wash their linen in a wayside pool or brook, as they did in Aristophanes’ time. You see it all over Europe; you see it in Kentucky to-day.

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It was not this practice which brought the business of washing to its low estate. The common washing pool has the merit of being open-air work and as social institution it rivals any club ever organized. It was the taking the clothes from the outside to the inside, and creating washday that damp, smelly, disorganized weekly event which the average American remembers with resentment and pain. Washday had its own code; its own customs. It began Sunday night with the operation known as "putting the clothes to soak." The work was continued before daybreak on Monday, the housewife's ambition being to get her clothes out before breakfast or, at least, before her next door neighbor. It meant warmed-over meals; justifiable bad temper; tired-out women at night. As life grew more complicated and things multiplied, the comparatively simple

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wash of fifty years ago became unmanageable in one day.

Manifold efforts have been made to ease the burden. One of the perennial inventions for generations has been the washing machine. The records of the patent office show some 5000 different patents for them. There is no well-equipped garret in the country that does not contain one or more, for generally while the woman buys them, her aversion to change keeps her from mastering them. The outfit for washing at home continues as it was in the beginning, — a tub, a board and a boiler. The wringer is the only invention generally accepted. It would seem as if the miserable conviction that washing can never be anything but a hard and unhappy business aroused resentment at anything that promised to make it easier!

The very first essential in any efficient

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system of domestic training must be to break up this idea that it is a collection of fixed ways of doing things — to train the mind of the girl to attack it openly — to rouse interest in experimenting — in fitting work to her needs and ways to her particular situation.

As things now are I am inclined to think that the most effective training that thousands of girls get for housekeeping is from a period of service in a modern scientifically managed factory, shop or office. She goes to the work room careless, inexact, inattentive, uninterested, — employers are recognizing quite generally the bad social as well as economic results of such labor, and they are working out a system of education which in many places is probably more fundamental and useful than anything the girl receives from family, school, church, or social agencies. Tasks are graded

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and the girl taught the operations required. She is given opportunities for exercise, amusement and study. She is instructed in the laws of health, courtesy, neatness. The improvements are striking in thousands of cases.

This experience in the modern factory or shop develops certain qualities and drives in certain ideas much needed in housekeeping. It demonstrates that order is not an external, artificial condition cultivated because of a fear of what people will think if you are disorderly, but that it is a law on which results depend and without which neither utility nor beauty are possible. It drives home the *reasons* for promptness, exactness, consideration of others. A girl who has become a desirable operative under our new industrial code has had a training which will serve her in anything she undertakes and without which nothing

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she would ever undertake could properly succeed. But what a reflection on the trainers of the young in and out of school that a girl must go into a factory or shop to learn to be prompt, exact, attentive, how to become interested in the thing to be done and to sense its relation to other things.

Our great grandmothers, not all of them, to be sure, but the better class, did for their daughters what these modern factories do. They trained for character and for what they regarded as good habits and sound ideas. The child was set at sewing or knitting at three or four — not that she might produce a sampler or a stocking or a quilt, but that she might learn how to use her fingers and to use them regularly. She was required to listen to the reading of severe and pious books while she worked, — the “Lives of the Saints,” or “Goldsmith’s



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Animated Nature," — that she might acquire the habit of using her mind as she used her fingers, — one of the most valuable aids to useful living a woman can have and something which our present training rarely takes into account. It was this sort of discipline that made it possible for Harriet Beecher Stowe to do housekeeping and care for her babes while she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She had been required as a child to listen to good stiff literature while she worked — her thoughts had been taught to keep time to her fingers. It is neither sensible nor useful to complain because things are not done now as our grandmothers did them. The only point is that our grandmothers succeeded in doing something which we would like to see done for our girls and which through the machinery of a universal compulsory education we feel ought to be worked out.

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It is highly improbable that the school alone can ever give as good a training as our grandmothers gave. It will lack the regularity and it will not be driven in by the constant practical application in the child's own home. It will not go on from one stage to another in the logical way that did. Whatever the school does, it should have the coöperation of the home; that is, what is taught in the one place should be applied in the other. The teacher and the mother should work together as in our industrial and technical schools teacher and employers are learning to work together to fit boys for trades. The boy spends a portion of his time allotted to industrial training in a shop where at lathe or bench he applies what he has been learning in the classroom.

If from kindergarten days to graduation we could have our girls regularly

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performing tasks at home which had been taught at school we would have results — not in making beds and cooking meals merely, but in the science of the business. There would be no question in the mind of a girl who had had such a course for ten years under an intelligent teacher and mother but that she had a vocation. Moreover, there is not a shadow of doubt but that this training would be of the greatest assistance in any work she might undertake in shop or factory or office. It would teach her to use her hands, give her sense of the qualities that work of all kind demands, give her habits, the lack of which now makes the average girl when she starts such an exasperating and discouraging problem.

But the great reason, of course, for insisting that some adequate system be developed and applied universally is

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that only in this way will the eighty-seven out of a hundred girls ever have a fair chance to succeed in that which they are to do.

It is generally accepted that a man has no right to marry until he "can support a wife." From the start his training is devoted to making him productive in order that he may marry and rear a family. He is more or less a skilled person. But the girl who must handle his skilled earnings — and no intelligent person will deny that her function is every whit as important economically as his — is unskilled. It is unfair to both of them, — as unfair as when two men — one a skilled manufacturer — the other an unskilled buyer and salesman — try to run a plant on equal terms. Give the girl a chance — not to learn box making, or typewriting or book-keeping, but to do the thing she must do.

**“THAT’S HER BUSINESS”**



## CHAPTER III

### “THAT’S HER BUSINESS”

IN these latter years the world has picked up a fashion of estimating at a very low value the contributions which women have made in the past to its activities and progress. The fashion would have been gone out long ago if, for campaign purposes, a group of women had not clung to it. But this is no inquiry into the reason of its persisting.

One of the by-products of this fashion is the surprise which greets reports of women doing well things which ordinarily have been done by men. Let a woman establish a shop, and the news travels across the continent; as if one of the greatest shops on earth had not been

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built up and managed by a woman! Let a woman win a lawsuit, and there is wonder, as if there had never been a Portia! Ever since the war began there has been almost a world-wide chorus of amazement over the exhibits of women in the countries involved. It began back in August of 1914, when travelers suddenly discovered the subways, the tramways, and the taxis of Paris to be run by women.

The change was made in a night, without fuss or feathers or exclamation, but the observers who had lived in the belief of the general unfitness of women stared in astonishment — a revolution! It's always a revolution, you know, when things occur of which you have never happened to hear! There was no revolution about the appearance of the women in Paris transportation; nor was it a revolution which led women



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to take up the street cleaning of provincial French towns, or which set them to acting as trolley conductors in England, or acting as bank clerks and a hundred other unusual things in Germany; and doing many things so well that their employers are talking of keeping them after the war — if they can.

In taking up these tasks they were doing what they had been doing all their lives — turning their hands to the next thing; meeting emergencies; filling sudden gaps; stepping into vacant places. The ordinary daily life of women fits, as no other school on earth, for rising to occasions. To bear children and to direct them into cheerful, self-controlled manhood and womanhood, and so to hold one man that he reverts neither into savagery nor sloth — one state or the other being his natural condition — is the greatest school on earth. It develops

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more unexpected situations and turns up more emergencies in a week than any trade or profession does in six months, situations and emergencies of every variety — physical, economic, social and moral.

A woman turns from binding up the broken head of a dare-devil boy to cheering a husband whose affairs are going to smash. She turns from entertaining her daughter's friends to meeting the crisis of her son's first cigar, or drink, or questionable companion. She does it regularly, steadily, naturally: and under the necessity she develops until she is ready for anything. If the house burns, five times out of ten she saves the baby and the family records, while nine times out of ten the husband saves the coal pail and the looking glass! If there's a crash and lacerated bodies and bleeding wounds, she knows what to do, and she

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does it. That’s her business. If she falters, it is only to pull herself together for a fresh effort. “You dare not faint; there is nobody knows but you,” a quivering man told his wife when she staggered after an hour and a half of relief work over a horribly burned man with the scanty improvised remedies of a pioneer home. She did not faint, she knew, too, that she dared not. It was her business to stick. It was what life had fitted her for, what her mother and grandmothers had done before her. It was in her blood.

American women should be the last to wonder at the promptness and ease with which European women have adjusted themselves to the unusual demands the war has made upon them. Throughout our history we have done the same — carrying a rifle or planting corn in pioneer days, supporting the

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family, organizing commissions, carrying help to battlefields in our wars.

When in 1776 loyalty demanded that we give up not only our tea but our silks and linens and feathers and furs — everything, in fact, that we imported — we invented a half dozen good drinks to stay us: Aunt Susan's tea, Labrador tea, New Jersey tea; and many a hand that had rarely lifted anything heavier than a fan learned to spin and weave and cut and fit an honest homespun.

From Maine to the Carolinas in those days women managed the farms and plantations, often with no other help than that of their children. They performed a self-appointed commissary service, without which the soldiers at many a point would have practically starved. Traveling on horseback, often alone, probably almost always in peril, they carried to the armies food they had raised, cloth they

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had spun, bullets they had made from treasured pewter; and they did it as naturally as they had performed services in times of peace.

No adequate tribute has ever been paid to the valiant readjustment to conditions made by the women of both North and South in the Civil War. It would be difficult to point to any kind of labor or business carried on in that period that was not somewhere assumed by women as a matter of course. On both sides they were a great rear guard, preserving the activities necessary to life. In the North women developed on two lines which were really much more revolutionary and noteworthy than anything we have seen in the present European struggle: they took up the cause of the North on the platform and in the press in a way at once more general and more distinguished than had been

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heard of in the world up to that time. The work they did, common enough now, was most uncommon then. Anna Dickinson and Gail Hamilton, and others of their kind, were war developments, women springing to a need they felt. The backing they had from the administration and the political party in power is substantial proof of the service they rendered.

The first nation-wide organization of women free from class and dogmatic prejudice — a truly democratic body — developed in their country, the women of the North established in the Civil War, the Sanitary Commission. It marshaled the hosts of every interest and kind from sea to sea, and laid the foundation for our present splendid system of public and private nursing, and of Red Cross activities. It was the sense of an emergency, the instinct to spring to

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fill it, which developed such women as Dorothea Dix, Clara Barton, and the scores they led.

Wherever you pick up the life of a woman whose activities or relations have taken the particular turn that makes her known to the public, you will find this faculty of taking hold of whatever is necessary to be done. In those delightful letters of Abigail Adams written late in the eighteenth century from France and England, when her husband was our representative in Paris and in London, and later written from the White House and from Massachusetts, as the wife of a President and ex-President, there are many glimpses of this ability.

An entertaining episode and one entirely characteristic of women’s ways is in a letter describing her first sea voyage. She was bound for London by a sailing vessel. The voyage took a full

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month, and for the first ten days poor Mrs. Adams was desperately ill. When she finally got her sea-legs, she found a ship utterly demoralized by the seasickness of the passengers and the unfitness of the crew. Dirt, disorder, discomfort and irritation prevailed. The reviving lady took a few glances around and demanded — mops! Under a grateful captain's eyes she taught stewards and sailors how to "clean up," and then she proceeded to organize them to keep clean. She looked into the kitchen, and the food improved; she visited the sick, and they improved. In a little time the *Active* was a changed boat!

If Mrs. Adams had been the wife of an American diplomat of 1914 on her way to Europe, she would have had a hospital organized and the money subscribed by the time she landed. Many an American woman in Europe sprang to



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meet the “instant need of things” as she saw them. Here it was a voluntary automobile service, and she and her machine traveled night and day. Here it was a home for convalescents, for Belgian babies, or refugee women, and her villa or château or Paris apartment was at their service, and she, in cap and apron, at work. They were following their instinct, as surely as the French, German, English or Russian women who went into the underground or the harvest field or the banks.

Nothing unusual happens in the world that does not turn up these cases. A few years ago, when the Island of Sicily was shaken by earthquake, an American woman whose recent public career has been unusually picturesque and important showed her ability in emergencies in a fashion to attract international attention. This was Doctor, or Commissioner, or Miss (as you prefer)

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Katherine Davis. She was in Palermo when the earthquake came, and she made her way to Syracuse as straight as a string. There was something to do there; and I doubt if she ever missed a thing she saw to do in her life, save through the inability to be in two places at once and do two things at once. So she went to Syracuse — and soon after she entered the racked and broken town she found herself in a great room of the Cathedral, left intact. On the floor were stretched scores of the victims. A distressing feature of their suffering was the white dust settled over them, caking their wounds. Miss Davis leaned over one old woman and gently wiped her face. Immediately a neighbor pled for a like service — the handkerchief was like a magic balm. Instantly she saw a need. Handkerchiefs, linen, to wipe their caked eyes and lips and wounds!

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Without ado she marched into the disrupted town, searching until she found what she wanted, a shop still standing. Without ado she entered, and with the help of friends drafted into service, she raided it: handkerchiefs, linen, cotton, anything that would serve her purpose she took, and used, to the infinite relief of hundreds. It was the beginning of a relief campaign conducted on purely personal and independent lines. What she saw to do she found ways to do or have done. One particularly sensible undertaking was the organizing of a shoe shop. Nobody had shoes, she found. At the same time hundreds had nothing to do; so she started a cobbler’s shop to cover the feet and save the reason.

There were other self-imposed tasks to meet, the extraordinary and unheard of demands a great catastrophe creates. She stayed on for weeks, and won a

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decoration — incidentally it might be said, for the Italians were not ungrateful, a decoration and an interview with the Pope! When it was reported by cable that she had been appointed to her present position she received congratulations from the mayor of Syracuse.

But Katherine Davis at Syracuse was the Katherine Davis of Bedford Reformatory, meeting wayward and vicious girls on their own terms, and dealing out to them that which so fitted their needs that the most incorrigible came in time to believe her a friend.

She was the Katherine Davis of the Department of Charities and Corrections, who, threatened with a hunger strike of the sort that had for years baffled the Government and the prison authorities of Great Britain, answered that she would roll would-be martyrs in blankets and feed them safely and quietly through

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the nostrils. Simple! Simple as genius, and so obvious that it set the country to laughing. Quick wit they called it. Woman’s wit, a woman’s way, they should have called it, the way that life as she has practiced it through the ages has taught her.

It is oftener than not the ability to meet emergencies which places one man or woman above another in the affairs of the world. It is one of the fine fruits of human training. It demands more than one well-trained faculty. It demands that all the faculties be in working order and acting in harmony. It demands such a control over them that they spring instantly and naturally to the task. Emergencies give no time for consultation, for “studying the case,” for getting ready. If they are to be met, they must be met on the spot; they require suppleness of mind and steadiness of nerve,

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instant command of resources, and instant invention of substitutes if resources are wanting. .

There is necessary, too, a philosophy of life which is too sound and too broad to be knocked into a cocked hat if one's "ways" and tastes and habits are disturbed. One of the surprises which await many of us who have had things pretty much our own way in life is the suddenness with which our philosophy goes to pieces if that to which we are accustomed, which we like and want, is taken away. All the serenity and steadiness on which we pride ourselves disappears. If we take an inventory of our state we shall find we are shaken because things—and usually material things—have not stayed "fixed." We are philosophers only when we have what we want.

Now this command of faculties and this steady philosophy are not gifts of

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nature, they are the result of training, and it is a training of which one gets but little in those orderly operations which men have devised, such as schools and trades and professions. They go into the making, of course, but are only one element. It comes from the mixture of gifts and withholdings, of efforts and indulgences, of gains and of losses, which make what we call our life — that surprising thing which comes to us, and out of which we get, or do not get, whatever of knowledge we have of ourselves, whatever control we have of our powers, whatever appreciation we have of values, and whatever vision we have of finer and worthier things, possible to men, but as yet unrealized.

It is a training which demands intimate contact with other lives. There is no human experience which offers greater opportunities for it than that of women

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in their family relations. That numbers of them do not recognize the value of the demands on them, that a few resent them rather vociferously, has but little to do with the case. The great fact, backed by all human experience in the past and present, remains, that the mass of women can be depended upon, when the crisis arises, to do whatever is needed, whether it is to shoulder a gun or run a street car. They are *trained* for it, *trained* by life, and, whatever the experiments they make, they will never find a substitute for their ancient school.



## **THE TALKATIVE WOMAN**



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TALKATIVE WOMAN

TALKATIVENESS is a hallmark of femininity. A silent woman may be admirable, but she stirs uneasiness. She is like a moon in eclipse, mysterious and fascinating, but not for daily life. The new woman bent on making over the sex is contemptuous of talkativeness. To allow the simple interests of daily life to run unconsciously and merrily off the tongue does not harmonize with the strenuous career she has planned for womankind. Not that she would shut her mouth. Far from it. She would make her a conversationalist, not a talker. There is the same distinction between the two that there is between the agriculturist and

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the farmer. There is the same term of life, for while the agriculturist is an experiment for a day, the farmer goes on forever.

For a habit which persists through the ages, in the face of censure and ridicule, as woman's talkativeness has, there is a reason. Generally it lies in the depths of life, where critics do not always explore. May it not be that woman's persisting habit of chattering has its reason?

One morning I found myself side-tracked in a Pullman sleeper. The train stood in a lovely wooded spot where birds sang and early flowers bloomed. The car was perfectly silent until there came in from breakfast a late pair — a young mother and a child possibly two years old.

Scarcely were they seated when the chattering began. It was the subject

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matter of it which quickly caught my ear. "Wobin, wobin," shouted the child suddenly, "see, see!" "Yes," the mother said, "Robin, Robin what?" "Wobin wed-best," promptly said the youngster. "Sing, wobin, sing," he ordered. "What's that?" asked the mother, pointing to a bluebird swinging gayly on a limb near the car. "Gosbick," he replied hesitatingly. "No, bluebird" — and so it went on, an excited watching and chattering over the birds that filled the trees.

How a child so young could have learned to distinguish form and color in birds as this one had, how it had acquired so lively and genuine an interest in them, excited my curiosity to such a point that I sought an interview.

"Is he as young as he looks, and how did you do it?" was the burden of my questions.

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“Twenty months,” the mother said, “and as to how it started, it was my chattering to him as I tried to amuse him with a picture book of birds. When I saw he was trying to speak the names, that he caught the colors and forms, I led him on. Last winter I took him to the Natural History Museum, and found he was able to distinguish several of the birds in the cases. So we’ve gone on. He knows a few notes. He’s learning many words, but of course what I prize is the habit of observation and of comparison he’s acquiring. He is really becoming quite an attentive child.”

I did not find in my brief talks with the woman whether or not she had ever studied psychology. It did not matter, she was doing better, for she was discovering the stuff from which that science is made. She had found that in the education of children, interest is at the

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bottom of learning, and that interest comes from going over and over all the various features of the thing — letting one lead to another. Perhaps she knew already James's rule for cultivating attention: "The *conditio sine qua non* of sustained attention to a given topic of thought is that we should roll it over and over incessantly and consider different aspects and relations of it in turn." Perhaps she knew that James had declared that "an education which should improve this faculty" [that of "sustained attention"] "would be the education par excellence."

But, as I say, she had something better — something that many who learn the laws and rules never know — she had discovered the truth on which the laws are framed.

In this little experience is wrapped up the chief reason why talkativeness has

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persisted among women. One of their chief obligations has always been teaching the child to talk. It could only be done by incessant repetition, going over and over the names of things until his ear caught the sound, his tongue framed it. It is not difficult to sustain the thesis that if it were not for the chattering of women, the child would never learn to talk. It has been done with grace and wit by one of the most brilliant French contemporary writers, Remy de Gourmont. He even goes so far as to declare that this chattering of women is a more important literary service than the writing of poems or philosophies.

There is no one, probably, that will deny that the first words a child attempts to speak are mere imitations of sounds — that they mean no more to him than sounds do to a parrot. When he begins to imitate there is always, or should be,



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a woman beside him, repeating, smiling, encouraging him. The play goes on, month in and month out. With infinite patience she chatters to him until consciousness is aroused. Then rapidly his education goes on, as it was doing in the case of my pair in the sleeper: Words are attached to objects; facts about objects are perceived; their form, their color, their odor, their relations to the little learner. The words for all these perceptions are slowly gathered in. Then the child learns to compare, to distinguish values, to remember not merely the sounds he learns but the meanings of those sounds. His mind is opened to the world, and through a woman's chattering!

"When he leaves her hands at six or seven," says M. de Gourmont, "he is a man, that is, he talks, which is what makes a man." "The great intellectual

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work of women," he goes on, "is teaching language. The grammarians claim that they do it, which is absurd. Children know how to talk before they go to school. They already use all the forms of the verb; all the shades of syntax, easily and correctly. The schoolmaster teaches them that a certain form which they use is the imperfect of the subjunctive, but that is not teaching them language. Language is a function, grammar is the analysis of that function. It is as useless to know grammar in order to speak a language as it is to understand physiology in order to breathe with the lungs or walk with the legs. This power of language the child gets from the woman. It is to her honor that later he will use it as a poet, novelist, philosopher or moralist, or, to use Nietzsche's strong phrase, as a 'creator of values.'"

Take this view of it — and who shall

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or can dispute its truth? — and how infinitely more valuable to the world is the chatter of women than all the books they ever wrote or orations they ever delivered. It is of that fundamental order of things, without which cultivation, even civilization, could not go on.

But feminine talkativeness plays another rôle almost as important as this of teacher and preserver of human speech. It is that of entertainer and consoler. There is none other so universal, and so on the whole so sure of its mark — story-telling, song-singing, sports and dancing combined have not done more in the world to break the dismal strain of fatigue, of pain, of discouragement than the gay talk of women. Here is what I mean, picked up in a hospital: A young woman was facing a dangerous operation and revolting bitterly against the situation. Her mother was sent

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for. She came, full of dread and anguish. Without a sign of what was in her own heart, she established herself by the bed, chattering for hours of things at home: the amusing sayings of the new Scotch cook, the tricks of the last puppy, the gayeties of the neighborhood. Chatter? Yes, God-sent chatter, based on a profound, if instinctive, sense of the human heart and its needs; it broke the revolt. This sort of service is part of the daily life of women. The old are warmed and enlivened by it; the discouraged forget themselves in it; the strenuous relax under its influence. It is one of the great consoling forces of society. It makes the daily hardships and efforts of millions of people endurable, not for any knowledge it shows, not for brilliance or wisdom or importance, but purely as a natural expression of the devotion, the sympathy,

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the affection that the chatterer feels for another.

But it is so idle, so silly, this chatter! Nothing is idle or silly which is born of an unselfish impulse to amuse, to arouse, or console another. Talk becomes silly only when it is selfish, vain, pretentious. No matter what the subject, it is tedious and uninteresting when it springs from one of these roots. There never yet was a satirist so cruel that he found material in the talk of a woman directed to teaching her child to speak, to the amusing of a worn-out husband, the consoling of a suffering friend. Their efforts become beautiful and sacred because of their intent. One sees only that, and thinks not at all of the things said.

It is not these women who have made talkativeness a reproach. It is those who are contemptuous of such

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common services, those who consider no talk worth while unless the subject matter is what they call "intellectual" — that is, as a rule, outside of the matter of which they know much, or in which they have more than the superficial interest they feel in anything which for the moment commands society's attention. The satirist never had fairer game than the woman who, convinced that conversation depends for quality on subjects, sets out deliberately to gather up facts and ideas in order that she may talk about them. It has become an activity, this of feeding for talk. There are teachers who weekly tell women what has gone on in the world, in order that these women may appear to be familiar with current events. There are other teachers who make digests of books and articles for them to speak of, others who tell them what to think of new music, new

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movements, new plays. They use their conscientiously gleaned information with confidence and fluency, convinced that they are elevating society.

There is plenty of material in our American cities and towns to justify Don Marquis in his lively conversations of Hermione and her "Little Group of Advanced Thinkers." These serious young women feel themselves "forced to take up many things to keep abreast of modern thought." They find it hard work, but reflect that it is a duty they "owe the race, . . . which makes the sacrifice easier." They feel it important to understand the French Revolution — the Caillaux trial led them to this conclusion! "So," says Hermione, "we took it up one evening and studied it thoroughly." Heredity they heard of, and to understand it spent an evening on sea urchins, — at least Hermione thinks

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it is heredity, — in connection with which they studied the sea urchin, “though it may have been in connection with biology — or — or —”

Possibly Hermione is less trying than the young woman who talks without ever having taken up any subject seriously for even one evening. It depends upon which of the two you are listening to. But all this is not saying that the woman who uses her tongue for another's benefit has no need of intellectual equipment. There is nobody needs it more. But she must have the real thing, not the superficial — she cannot teach her child or console her friend with faked interests, themes hastily picked up between luncheon and tea time from the lips of a purveyor of facts. She must know and feel and delight in what she talks about. Her purposes are so deep in the heart of things they cannot be



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reached by light plummets. The more she really knows and sees and appreciates, the better she can do her work. All the education and cultivation she can get is none too much for one who leads a little child to consciousness, who lifts the heavy burdens of life from the shoulders of friends or mate.

It is as natural for the normal woman to talk as for the bird to sing. It is the spontaneous expression and giving of herself. It is this naturalness which gives to her talkativeness its perennial charm as well as its incalculable value in the scheme of things. The woman in the human group is much like the Monarch in Pierre Mille's delightful tale of that name. "Why do people call me the Monarch? Why am I loved? Why always happy? Because," he explains, "I always have time to talk. Without me the people around here would be

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bored to death. I go and come, laugh and sing, I cost nothing but a glass of wine, and a bit of supper. What do I give? I give *myself*."

The woman gives herself.

## **THE CULTURE CHASERS**



## CHAPTER V

### THE CULTURE CHASERS

ABOUT forty years ago there was started in connection with the summer assembly on Chautauqua Lake in the state of New York an organization known as the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. It offered a four-years' reading course, designed by its founders to give the college outlook. This reading course became enormously popular. At one time as many as one hundred thousand readers were enrolled. While many of those who enrolled never finished the course, thousands did and received a diploma recognizing their achievement. Hundreds of these graduates continued the work, taking up course after course of

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advanced reading offered by the institution.

It was my fortune to begin my journalistic career on the magazine which served the Chautauqua reading courses. Through my hands there passed for several years a continuous stream of letters revealing much of the lives and aspirations of the readers, at least ninety-five per cent of whom were women. One vivid impression of this vast correspondence remains with me. It is the genuine, even poignant, longing of many of the writers to be reckoned among those whom the world called cultured. They wanted this with as much intensity as their men folks probably wanted money, though I doubt if they could have explained the reason for their ambition as concisely.

The painful and discouraging feature of the case was the idea many of our

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correspondents had of culture. They did not understand it to be ripeness and sureness of mind, it was not taste, discrimination, judgment; it was an acquisition — something which came with diplomas and degrees and only with them. Many of them obviously believed that by finishing the reading course they would automatically be classed with cultivated people. Their argument was that since a college course meant culture, one giving a college outlook must mean culture. Our efforts to set the course for what it was worth, — and that was considerable, — to forestall false notions and false hopes, seemed as a rule only to bewilder our readers, so fixed were they in their belief that culture came with diplomas and degrees. They plainly regarded it as treason to suggest that this was not a necessary result.

I have always believed that the de-

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clining popularity of the Chautauqua reading courses was partly due to the discovery that there was no magic in it. Like the college course, its worth depended upon the powers it loosened, the tastes and interests it awakened, the capacity it developed to go on after the diploma was earned. If none of these things happened — and so often they did not — then all that the reader of the course, like many a student in the college, carried away was a budget of facts and the discipline and self-control which result from sticking to a set task. He soon discovered this meant precious little among people — certainly it gave no particular distinction.

The theory that culture follows a diploma is less popular than it was twenty years ago. It has been succeeded by another, which women are applying in all our large towns and cities with as



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much enthusiasm and confidence as ever possessed a Chautauqua Circle. The present theory is that culture results from seeing — hearing — sampling everything new in ideas, in movements, in music, in the drama and literature. All over the country the exponents of this theory chase culture from morning until night. It is they who can be depended upon to fill a theater at ten or eleven in the morning to listen to a lecture on Peace or the Cancer Cure, Suffrage or Tagore, Radium or the Panama Canal. It is they who are the instant ally of any cause which is new and it is they who will stay by as long as the campaign is exciting — or until something more exciting looms in sight.

Many things which thrive for a time would die of inattention without them. A horde of lecturers, entertainers, and promoters support themselves through

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the power of these groups to exercise unlimited and heterogeneous interest, to keep up speed and temperature through a succession of entirely unrelated ideas and activities. Without their theory of culture to sustain them, they could never endure the aches and pains and the awful, dull spots which are inevitable in a program thrown together as theirs is. They believe too that in supporting this theory of culture they are serving the community. If they go to bed many a night half hysterical with fatigue and wholly muddled in brain they still have a sense of duty well done to sustain them. That for which they apologize is not following their crazy program but for cutting out a lecture — a benefit — a committee. That is a failure to do your whole duty.

How sound is this theory of culture? Test it by certain mental and spiritual

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results which we have a right to expect from genuine cultivation, and where do we come out? What kind of a lecture audience, for instance, do they make? This is the occupation to which they probably give most serious attention. Do they experience fresh, acute reactions? Do they discriminate? A lecturer has a right to ask that from a cultivated mind. Try a subject on them in which you as a speaker are truly interested and of which you know something; you will get the most unfailing attention — and no sense of rebound. The attention is fixed to the point of staring but the mind simply is not there; is at least not at work. One can almost see it trying to unhook itself from the committee which preceded the lecture or running ahead to get a peek at what the next hour offers.

Give the same talk to a group of men — you'll not be able to get them together

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unless they think you have something they ought to listen to — and the effect is entirely different. It is real interest — or an exodus.

Try the same talk on a group of working women and you will get living attention. They follow with eagerness and appreciation. To them it is a relaxation — a change of ideas. They take what you have to offer gratefully and for what it is worth — no more or less. There is no duty about it. They are not following a profession in listening to you. They are doing what they are pleased to do for the most natural of reasons — the desire for a taste of something different.

The power quickly to know a real thing, to recognize the “ring” of truth, the “feel” of quality, is the result of cultivation and a sound test of it; and here is a point at which the group gener-

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ally fails. They expect others to do their judging for them. They get themselves and others into funny muddles, frequently by their indiscriminate enthusiasms and curiosities. Plausible and attractive pretenders and swindlers of the intellectual world find an easy prey in this group. Hardly a winter goes by that they are not "taken in" by some clever imitator. A momentary confusion and the episode is forgotten. While the sober-minded are still bewailing their gullibility, they are out of sight and the shock out of mind. A new excitement has claimed them.

A lack of fidelity to causes and interests which they have taken up characterizes the advocates of this school of culture. A mind which really lays hold of a subject is not easily detached from it. It wants to finish it and there is irritation on being called off from it too soon. It

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is like an unpaid debt — a half-furnished room. The mind goes back to finish up when it can — but there is no such need awakened in the members of this group. They are neither ashamed of temporary interests nor even conscious of them. They have no conception that culture demands anything so plodding and unexciting as a permanent interest. A permanent interest means refusing many things in order to carry through a selected one. That is not culture according to their theory.

Apply another test — the power to report intelligently and clearly the thing taken up. A mind truly cultivated never feels that the intellectual process is complete until it can reproduce in some medium the thing which it has absorbed. That is, a cultivated mind must give out — else its inner springs sour of inaction; and it must give out a sound

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thing, something as good as it got — at least the bones of the thing must be whole. What sort of reporters do these culture chasers make?

A recent experience of the writer in concentrating on a subject which was entirely out of her field may illustrate the point. It was brought back sharply to her by a passage in Neil Lyons's pungent story "Clara." There is a gentleman in the tale, Mr. Cozenza, accounted rich in the world of street vendors, singers and beggars where Clara moves. He seems to have made his money on the race course, but there is a suspicion it may have had less conventional sources. He is rich and retired and friendly. His chief interest is Science. He gets his science much as our group gets its culture, by sundry and various lectures at settlements, night schools, and the like. He is repeating what he

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has learned of the latest theory of life and the universe to his friends in the saloon.

“It is all very simple, really, only it’s difficult to put it plainly. I mean to say it’s plain really, only it’s entangled with itself, like. Ya see that light over ther? Well that light is Electricity. And Electricity is Life. See? Only what we call Life is not Life. Have you ever heard of a new mixture, which goes by the name of Radium?”

“Worth a million pounds an ounce, ain’t it?” said a listener.

“That’s the stuff! Well, this Radium is really life. But life is really jelly, which you find in the sea. So this jelly is the same as Radium, ya see. Only they can’t find any of the jelly. And Radium is scarce. So they invented Electricity. And there is Radium in Electricity if they could find the way to get it out. At the same time, there’s no jelly there.

“It’s all absurdly simple, really. What I want ya to understand is that you, and your children, and that light over there, and the jelly in the sea, are all related, one to another. You’ve got the same life. See? You’ve got Elec-



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tricity. You've got it all over you. And Electricity is Radium and Radium is jelly. But they can't find the jelly. And Life is jelly, and — but you can see it! Now, can't you?"

Some three or four years ago the writer was asked by the program committee of a club to which she belonged to write a digest of a book which treated the same subject as that which interested Mr. Cozenza. She did the best she could — conscientiously boning its unfamiliar terms and arguments until she had what she believed to be an understandable statement. A scientific friend looked it over to see if she had used the words right and the performance was solemnly made. Now what startled the writer was the fact that when after reading Mr. Cozenza she tried to put down off-hand a short statement on “electricity, radium, life and jelly” she found

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she was no clearer than he and not half so entertaining. That is, the thing had not become a part of her equipment of ideas.

There is a perfectly sound reason for Mr. Cozenza and the writer dabbling in the New Knowledge. Mental distraction is its own justification, but one should no more call these distractions culture than he should set down a day in the country to a travel account.

To dip into the varied interests of life as we find them in towns and cities and country gives real distraction to hard-working people. This is the solid basis for women's clubs. It is the sound justification for reading courses like those Chautauqua offers. It changes the ideas of women absorbed in home and social cares. It gives them refreshing glimpses of outside things. It is of high value as a stimulus and distraction, but it does

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not necessarily mean culture. It is too superficial, too varied, too hasty to serve so serious a purpose.

Culture is a slow process. It comes from long and close contacts. It is the fruit of reflection, of travail of soul and of mind. Grappling with something until the very essence of it has been extracted is a first step. Thus the taste of essences is learned, and once learned lesser distillations do not satisfy. Then follows a growing power to discriminate, to distinguish nice values, to judge of quality, to answer to beauty, to feel the need, that what you have — though it may be little — may still be the real thing. This is culture. It is not baggage, like diplomas and degrees — it is not things seen and heard, miles traveled or books read. These are the materials for culture; they contribute to it only when they are absorbed by

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the mind and as really lost in it as water and lime, phosphates and ammonia, must be lost in the soil if they are to enrich it and enable it to increase its yield.

## THE TWENTY-CENT DINNER



## CHAPTER VI

### THE TWENTY-CENT DINNER

THERE is a strong inclination among men to believe that you can mark by a dollar sign the point on the highway of life where it is excusable to break the traffic regulations, tear up the roadbed, or take to the woods. It is an inclination born of that passionate revolt against misery and sin which is the strongest force in some natures. The idea of human suffering is so intolerable to them that they must have laws against it — quick, sure laws. “Do this!” they cry to us. “Come this way, and all will be well.”

Would that it were so easy !

A few months ago a young working

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girl in Chicago attempted to take her own life. "Why did you do this?" asked the doctor who was making what proved to be a useless attempt to save her. "Doctor," said the girl, "did you ever eat twenty-cent dinners?"

The story was widely quoted as an argument for various schemes looking to higher wages, better working conditions and more amusement. The matter resolves itself into a discussion of whether the twenty-cent dinner is an acceptable reason for suicide and, if it is, whether there are no quicker and surer ways of circumventing it than legislation. These queries are no sooner voiced than another pertinent one follows: If it is a sound reason, why is the earth so well-filled as it is to-day? A little figuring on wages and incomes will show that half, and more, of its people never have had dinners that cost even twenty cents.



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Take your man on a thousand dollars a year — and a thousand dollars is a handsome wage as things are in the world — what can he pay for the dinner of himself and his wife and his three children? Studies of budgets of wage earners show that in this country from forty to forty-five per cent of incomes averaging \$1000 to \$1200 a year must go for food. Put it at forty-five per cent, or \$450 — \$90 a year per person, or 25 cents a day. Evidently there will be few twenty-cent dinners eaten in that household, yet there will be thousands of such homes where there is health, gayety and thanksgiving.

Moreover, if you study the conditions under which much of the most brilliant work of the world has been carried on, you will find that the twenty-cent dinner was often the feast for holidays. Mary Lyon educated herself, and built Mount

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Holyoke College, on dinners that rarely averaged anything like twenty cents, the difference in the purchasing power of money strictly considered.

Professor Palmer says that Alice Freeman used to say that in her childhood she associated luxury *with a keg of salt mackerel!* Susan B. Anthony did some of the most spirited campaigning we've ever had in these states from man or woman, and there were days when it looked doubtful if she would have *any* dinner. If any one of the three ever considered suicide it was certainly not because of what she had had to eat. Poets and philosophers have gone even farther — for they have not only done their work on frugal fare, they have celebrated its virtues.

How have vast multitudes not only found life livable on plain food, but in spite of it achieved happiness, success,

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and honors? When does the meal become impotent? What is the magic that makes it a curse for one, a blessing for another? Or is it the dinner that is curse or blessing?

There is a way of attacking life which we call practical. Multitudes of men and women have adopted it. One of its most interesting manifestations is circumventing by art and skill the thing we don't like until it becomes the thing we do like. When it comes to twenty-cent dinners, the practical man before committing suicide investigates the possibilities of the situation. Must such a meal be meager, monotonous, savorless? Is there no way to redeem it? What a throng of men and women, since time began, have tasted and experimented and combined everything above, below, and upon the earth, in their efforts to find abundant, cheap, palatable food.

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What testing of roots and twigs, of crawling and flying things! What drying of fruits and canning of vegetables! It was in the effort to escape the twenty-cent dinner — by which is meant any savorless meal — that the Chinaman found his chop suey, the Hungarian his goulash, the Frenchman his bouillabaisse, the Irishman his stew and the Yankee his boiled dinner. They would not be beaten by poverty — they would not only fill their stomachs but satisfy their appetites, please their palates. The stubborn fight with the twenty-cent dinner has given us some of our choicest delicacies, discoveries forced by hunger, and determination not to succumb. Was it anything else that toasted the first snail or stewed the first bird's nest?

Every generation has carried on the fight for the good and satisfying meal which was also the cheap. What

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victories the fighters can relate! They are written in thousands of volumes, and they dispute the space in a thousand journals with law, adventure, and politics.

All over this and other lands we find their successes standing out in contemporary annals. Feats of efficiency, of ingenuity, of culinary art! A year ago I found myself the guest of the girls of a Western college — fine, gay, hard-working girls — who waited by turn on the well-spread tables. It was good food, and I inquired as to cost. “We allow \$2.15 a week, but we haven’t been able to spend over \$2.07 this term — usually we run about \$1.98.” “Allowed \$2.15 a week and not able to spend over \$2.07!” Where, oh, where is the twenty-cent dinner in that budget? It couldn’t live, save as a holiday treat. What terrors had it for these young women?

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They had defeated it. It was one of the slain foes which dog life's footsteps.

But here you say is coöperation, whole-sale buying, trained minds devoting themselves to the problem. The one who works, and must cater to one cannot do this. Having done it for the major part of three happy and profitable years in a great city, the writer flatly disputes the assertion.

Brains, then, conquer the twenty-cent dinner, brains, mixed with determination.

But there are multitudes of dinners on frugal foods that seek no substitutes, no variety, no sauce or spice. They eat their bread and cheese with rejoicing, or in blissful unconsciousness that it is not caviare or ortolan. These are those happiest of all eaters, those with a healthy hunger. Of the two meals which linger

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in my mind as the most delicious I ever ate — the sweetness of which I shall never forget — one was made up of black bread and coarse cheese, only discovered after a long hunt at a wayside station in France, the other of two battered sandwiches rescued from the bottom of a Swiss bag after six hours of fighting in a blinding snow storm across a glacier and down a mountain side. Twenty-cent dinners! A two-cent crust is sweeter than honey cake with such an appetite as cold and struggle give.

Hunger turns the coarsest food to ambrosia. Work in hot pursuit of an end thrusts the poor meal so far out of mind that it has no chance to irritate and depress. Where there are great things doing in the mind — love, ambition, a clear purpose — there is no place for self-pity or repining over meager living.

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In the great city where lived the poor child who killed herself because of twenty-cent dinners, hundreds of girls who eat no better, possibly much worse, rush gayly from work to night classes, to neighborhood gatherings, to amusements, and to efforts at self-improvement. The girl who after a long day behind the counter or at the desk makes herself brave for a suitor is little concerned with the kind of a dinner she ate. She had one, and has forgotten it. The girl who sees just ahead of her a promotion which hard extra work has won for her thinks as little of her dinner. She is on the high road to better and better things, and meager living, if necessary to furthering her ambition, is looked on as a part of the game. It is the spirit of battle which carries her over rough places, that, and the vision of achievement, which leads her on.



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The world is full of spirited people who insist on making a game of their small opportunities, of finding fun and satisfaction in what they get. It may be little, but with little they make a whole. Did it never occur to anybody to envy O. Henry's clerk who rushed nightly up to his hall bedroom to lose himself ecstatically in the glow of warmth and excitement coming from sitting with his shoeless feet on the steam radiator reading the thrilling yarns he picked up for next to nothing at the second-hand book store? Do any of us realize how many thousands of men and women who might want to commit suicide if they had nothing but their dinner to think of are spending enthralling evenings because of the free circulation of books which every city and town in the country encourages? The country is full of opportunities for rounded living for the

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poorest, if they are willing and know how to tackle their lives as sporting propositions.

Even dinner becomes for many a man or woman a sporting proposition, particularly at those times when it is not twenty cents for one meal but twenty cents for three.

The columns of "Letters from the People" which the great city dailies print not unfrequently contain pictures of brave and cheerful wrestling with fate. Here is a fragment from such a letter. The writer was reduced to seeking employment, feeding himself, and getting amusement, all on thirty-three cents a day: "It's interesting," he wrote, "and to tell how it's done may be helpful to some forlorn brother." And then follows a really practical description of what may be done with what he calls "that wonder-working bit of currency,

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the nickel. . . . I just enjoy juggling those nickels' worth!"

This is true sportsmanship, high courage; moreover, it is not nearly so rare as those people think who look for it only among those who go into battle, who sail the seas, or hunt big game. Certainly, whatever misery there is in the twenty-cent dinner has no surer or more common antidote than the human propensity to be a good sport.

These are some of the ways in which men and women have met the ogre and reformed him, or made him powerless<sup>1</sup> for ill. They are much more effective methods than any legislation can devise, and they are vastly more self-respecting and interesting. They are teachable, too, — things that every sympathetic heart can spread with the certainty that they will work, that every man or woman that lays his hand to one of them

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will never again let his dinner be his moral undoing. They are the only guarantees, too, that thirty-cent dinners, fifty-cent, and dollar dinners may not some day be as reasonably taken as an excuse for suicide as the twenty-cent dinner. It was not the commonplace, flavorless meal that forced the girl to take her life, it was her ignorance of the fact that by mixing brains with it she might have made it interesting and savory; it was her failure to seek new interests, to find new friends, to develop and pursue a purpose; it was the undeveloped sporting quality in her make-up, the inability to see life as a game to be played with the cards in hand.

The wrong that society did her was not in giving her so little money but in depriving her of the moral and mental training necessary to use effectively what she had. Somehow, out of the medley

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of unrelated ideas which had found their way into her brain to be brooded over in hours of fatigue and disappointment, she had developed overwhelming self-pity, a detestation of a life which was meager and struggling. Her revolt was balanced and directed by no knowledge of the means by which vast numbers of men and women are meeting and conquering situations like hers — and worse. No one had taught her to take life gallantly, had pointed out the good things within her means, had held out reasonable hopes of what effort and interest and good sportsmanship might do. She had never been taught the meaning of courage — she knew it only as endurance, submission, spiritless acceptance. Of that courage whose very essence is faith in the silver lining to all clouds, in the morning after the darkest hours, no sufficient idea had been given her.

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Here is the gravest wrong, the most desperate deprivation for which those of us who influence the lives of others — and no one escapes that grave liability — are responsible. It is not a minimum wage, an eight-hour day, a social center — good and necessary measures as they all are — which will take the sting and bitterness from life. No one, or all, could have saved the girl if she had never learned to fight what she did not like, to care for something more than for her dinner, to feel a zest for struggle and adjustment. It is active brains, working hearts, an eye for the passing panorama, and courage — more courage and still more courage — which alone make life endurable. It is never the price of your dinner.

## A YOUNG GIRL'S THOUGHTS





## CHAPTER VII

### A YOUNG GIRL'S THOUGHTS

THERE is a singular obtuseness as to the double life young girls lead, among those who are supposed to guide and guard them. The guardian takes it for granted that the girl is what he sees. That with her whom he knows there walks one of whom he knows nothing, he has hardly a suspicion. And yet this unseen life is often much more intense, much more precious to the girl herself than her visible life. It is the "real self," at which she sometimes hints mysteriously. It is the thing which convinces her that she is "not like other girls" — is misunderstood, unappreciated.

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So far as she can make out, those who direct her know nothing of this world of singular sensations, moods, ideas, she finds breaking in upon her. With the sensitiveness of the fresh young mind to the unspoken thoughts of others she feels that these obscure but real experiences of hers, if suspected, are deliberately ignored, because "disapproved"; at least they are not to be talked about frankly and naturally like food and clothes, and books, and play. Often she concludes that they are classed with those things which are to be "overcome," that is, put out of existence.

Strange doings go on secretly in this life of her mind. What wonderful things she constructs in her attempt to realize the meaning of the things she is taught! Her mind is full of reconstructions, like those of Anatole France's little boy, who, needing to visualize the Garden of

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Eden, accepted the Jardin des Plantes as its true self, and the *gendarme* in red trousers at the gate as the angel with the sword.

Her mind is full of splendid ladies and gentlemen, — the rich, the great, the noble, — and she has the most definite notions of what they look like; what they do; what they say. Her first meeting with the “millionaire’s daughter” is a sickening blow, for the girl is like herself, even to her white shirtwaist and stout boots.

No one can tell how early these dreams of the grandeur of men and women begin. Marie Bashkirtsev says that from the time she was three years old she had these strange and wonderful dreams. Her very dolls in the nursery were to her always kings and queens, knights and fine ladies; and her own thoughts, and all the conversation of those about

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her, seemed to her to refer to a time when she herself would be of the magnificent company of which she so vividly dreamed.

There is a wonderful and beautiful land in which the girl wanders by the hour; she does not know its name, but she'll learn some day; it is called Romance. Here she, a girl of six or seven, dreams of lovers and unspeakable happiness. And always in the streets of the town, in the church to which she is taken, is some handsome youth who is the prince, and whom, while she demurely kneels, she is watching adoringly from the corners of her eyes.

Then there is the Vale of Secrecy, where the grown-ups move but never admit her — whispering sometimes in her presence things she cannot understand, but which, she senses, concern her. These things she feels she must

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know. The impression they make on her is that, though they themselves walk in this Vale, they still think it somehow wrong — “bad.” And there are moments when she weeps because these guardians and friends are smirched in her eyes by their concealments and winkings. She hates them at moments — they who talk so much of goodness and “doing right.” Why, why are they not fair with her? Nothing is “bad” to her — nothing but concealment and lying. That is the way she is made. But she will know; and she finds out, and builds up strange, distorted images of things — unclean, false notions. A few years later when she is in the high school the grown-ups will attempt to teach her something of the Vale of Secrecy. It is too late. She knows a score of things they have forgotten, for they are old and she is young. She senses that the

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flame gone out of them is alive in her. Moreover, they shock her by the lateness and the indirectness, and the humorless solemnity of their teachings. Her mind is full of misconceptions, her body full of flame, but her spirit, in spite of all, is great with reverence, and the tardy, fleshless skeleton they put up outrages her. She is great in the knowledge of her youth and its immense possibilities. They are too late and too public.

What does the mother see in the girl who is leading this intense concealed life of thought? Why, generally, an obedient creature who loves a pretty frock, wheedles her father, frisks, dances, sleeps twelve hours out of twenty-four — “a perfectly normal child, save for now and then a tantrum, which is to be expected, you know.” And yet this girl of hers feigns sleep on the couch to listen to strange conversations she knows not

## A YOUNG GIRL'S THOUGHTS

to be for her ears. She reads every book "kept out of the children's sight;" she lies awake at night to plan an elopement with a down-town bank cashier, whose name she does not even know; and if her ideas of the processes of life could be put down on paper they would throw her elders into fits.

There is no telling how long she will preserve her inner life. She does not want to yield it. Why should she? It is more enticing, far lovelier, than the life of work and play "they" provide for her. Moreover, it is "hers"; she discovered it, owns it. And so she goes on with this double existence, and lays the foundation for that troubling, sphinx-like trait that will make her forever a riddle to herself and to the one whom she will finally love the best, and to whom she would gladly give her full mind — a baffling enigma.

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Lucky will she be if the pressure of these concealed thoughts and fancies does not lead her into fantastic experiments. Actuality, truth, has never had a place in this world of hers. She has admitted there, in the form which pleased her most, anything that added to the excitement, mystery, enthrallment. The day sometimes comes, however, when the ideas become tyrannical — they want to be put to the test, to be acted on. She accepts as a matter of fact the impossible “poisoned needle,” and constructs a tragedy of which she is the victim. But this time the idea stalks out of her concealed life into the unconcealed, and she announces herself with cunning detail and every sign of sincerity as having absolutely been pierced by this imaginary weapon. That was recently the case with more than one girl in New York City who found her way into



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the hospital, the victim of a "poisoned needle," which existed only in her own mind.

Case after case of girls who run away, if traced to its source, would be found to come from the desire finally to realize the bizarre adventures they have lived for years in their minds. "Why should she have done this?" a mother wails. "We thought her happy. We gave her everything she wanted." Before the disconcerting discovery that this girl she believed or took for granted was one thing, is quite another, her feeling of abused confidence is keen. She believes herself the wronged party; but is she? If the girl had developed tuberculosis, or typhoid, or dyspepsia, the mother would not have been so confident of her guiltlessness. But this: "How could I know what she was thinking?" And the world repeats: "How could you?"

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But why should any mother suppose that her girl will not go through the same mental, physical and spiritual experiences that she did? Why should she not be as watchful for them as for signs of croup or fever?

Generally she is not, because of one or the other of two habits of mind which have come to control her own life. Often she has never been able to infuse into her own inner life the wholesome air of truth. She has never opened it frankly to the real world of beauty, and poetry, and idealism. It still is a closed, secret life of more or less distorted imagination. Here, as when a girl, the mother broods over the notion that she is "different." She is so isolated in her grotesque egotism that the last thing she realizes is that her own little girl is being forced to create a similar unreal world to satisfy her dawning consciousness.

## A YOUNG GIRL'S THOUGHTS

One woman fails because she has saved her world of unrealities. Another fails because she has destroyed it! This second mother has made a world of outside things — a stirring, energetic world of work, play, people, movement. By giving herself never a moment for dreaming and reflecting she comes to believe the only world which is satisfactory is one made up of an endless chain of things to do — one quite stripped of anything like thinking. Having put an end to thought and dreams in herself she is not sensitive to the signs of them in others. “Keep the child occupied” is the sum total of her maternal wisdom. The child goes obediently through the paces, but behind her innocent eyes thoughts are coming and going which would make her energetic mother’s hair stand on end if she could conceive of them.

That the hands may be busy with one

## THE WAYS OF WOMAN

thing and the thoughts with one quite different is no news. It is the commonest of experiences. It is the salvation of monotonous toil. There is an old story of a factory girl, who, when asked if the unending feeding of her machine did not weary her, said: "Oh, no! In the morning I play I am a duchess, and the rest of the day is short." "Keeping a child busy" is no sure guarantee that her mind is not vagabonding in forbidden places.

It may be that the processes of their own minds are the last that women are going to study and control. They hide, deny, shrink from them. The fiction of the badness of little boys and the goodness of little girls is treasured. They want to believe it. If in their hearts they know they were in their own feminine way as natural little reprobates as their brothers, they are careful to forget it as

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they grow up. "I did queer things when I was a child, but I was different. My little girl is perfectly normal." She probably is, which proves that she will do "queer things."

It takes enormous experience to make a man or woman believe that in spite of varieties there is only one species; that we are alike in all essentials. What the mother goes through the girl goes through. The mother's business is to chart and light the road with all the knowledge she can command — knowledge gathered first from a study of her own mental experiences. None other will be so sound and communicable. But to the interpretation of her experience let her bring all that the most enlightened psychology can give.

We often shy at the word psychology. It does not seem a thing for practical life. We treat it as if it were a specula-

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tive and not a natural science. But the woman who would guard her daughter must grasp the fact that psychology is just as much her business as physiology. The one deals with known laws of the mind, the other of the body. These must be obeyed if the mind is to develop harmoniously and naturally. Wonderful as it all is, it is no land of utter mystery. Grant, as James says, that the breaches between your thoughts and my thoughts are "the most absolute breaches in nature," the process, the reactions, the laws of your mind and my mind are the same, and have been reduced to indisputable order.

The mother must recognize that self-consciousness is developing; that it is an utterly distinct thing; that everything that causes sensation will act on that mind, and that gradually conceptions will be formed, reflections incres-

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santly will go on, explanations will be sought and accepted. Her first task is to recognize this developing self-consciousness; to realize that the child is not merely a stomach to be fed and a body to be kept clean and warm.

She must recognize that everything — everything without exception — that falls under her girl's eye or on her ear may produce a reaction, and that it is utterly impossible to have an idea which one of these reactions will be a determining cause in that child's life.

Sonya Kovalevsky, in her autobiography, says that one of the first causes of her interest in the science of mathematics, where she so distinguished herself, was the purest accident. The family had gone to the country to live. The paper for one of the rooms which the children occupied was long in coming from St. Petersburg. Now, by chance,

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a lining paper had been put in this room made up of sheets of lithographed lectures on differential and integral calculus. Fascinated by the queer figures the child spent hours trying to decipher them. She never arrived at any sort of meaning, but the formulæ became engraved on her brain. When she was fifteen years old she took her first lesson in calculus, and her teachers were amazed at the quickness with which she grasped the terms; it was, they said, as if "she had known them all her life."

The part in this awakening of consciousness which the imagination plays, no one can ever know. But that it is forever playing on every perception and sensation is undoubted. Openly recognized, fully fed, it will do much to keep the mind sweet, the impulses right, the passions in check.



## A YOUNG GIRL'S THOUGHTS

Bernard Shaw, the playwright, never said a wiser thing than recently, when he told an English congress, discussing sex education, that they were "frightfully wrong" in expecting athletics to solve the problem. It was "keeping the imagination at work" by arousing a real interest in the fine arts, in music, in painting and poetry, that would do most to keep the "cruder passions" under control.

To think that you can stifle or control one legitimate function of the human being by an over-exercising of another is the most stupid of educational tricks. Athletics, yes, for making normal bodies. And beauty and romance and mystery for the imagination. Where the wholesome and the enthralling are both recognized as needs, and every effort to supply them made, you have provided the surest guards there are. The young girl

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can be trusted "to pick her way through the tremendous things of life."

What does she know? More than you can tell her. She knows what she wants; what she must have. There are two great studies of the young girl face to face with evil, which those who pretend to guide the girl should know: they are Henry James's "What Mazie Knew," and Meredith's "One of Our Conquerors." When the girl knows evil, she is not afraid to face it — she is capable of deciding.

And this instinctive profound sense in her cries for recognition and illumination. She is so truly a pure thing at the start that the plain facts of things can be put to her, and forgotten. No lies; no evasion. Recognition and respect for her growing consciousness; watchfulness over the impressions she receives; recognition of her need of romance and

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beauty and sensation; encouragement in getting them.

This the woman can give the girl. It is the strongest armor; the armor of right and beautiful thoughts.

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